



Association for the Study of Obesity

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FINANCIAL YEAR ENDING
JUNE 2022

Charity number: 1100648

ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF OBESITY | 483 GREEN LANES, LONDON, N13 4BS

About ASO

The Association for the Study of Obesity was founded in 1967 and has since become the UK's foremost charitable organisation dedicated to the understanding, prevention and treatment of obesity.

ASO Mission

The ASO aims to develop an understanding of obesity through the pursuit of excellence in research and education, the facilitation of contact between individuals and organisations, and the promotion of action to prevent and treat obesity.

ASO Objectives

- The promotion of professional awareness of obesity and its impact on health
 - Educate and disseminate recent research on the causes, consequences, treatment, and prevention of obesity
 - Prioritise obesity and provide opinion leadership in the UK
 - Enhance understanding of the prevention and treatment of obesity throughout the UK
 - Improve the quality of obesity education throughout the UK
 - Forge links between individuals and organisations concerned with the study of obesity throughout the UK
 - Support the role of patient and public involvement in obesity research
 - Connect active researchers and practitioners from diverse disciplines who contribute to the development of a UK perspective on obesity.
 - Provide appropriate input on the UK perspective at a European and international level through EASO and the World Obesity Federation.
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The ASO is affiliated to the European Association for the Study of Obesity (EASO) and the World Obesity Federation (WOF) and organised the inaugural International Congress on Obesity, held in London in 1974. ASO was the founding body of the highly respected International Journal of Obesity.

The ASO is also a member of the Obesity Health Alliance (OHA), a coalition of over 30 charities, medical royal colleges and campaign groups who have joined together to fight obesity.

2021/22 Business Priorities

The Trustees present their annual report together with the financial statements of the Company for the year 1 July 2021 – 30 June 2022. The Annual Report serves the purposes of both a Trustees' report and a Directors' report under company law. The Trustees confirm that the Annual Report and Financial Statements of the charitable company comply with the current statutory requirements, the requirements of the charitable company's governing document and the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS102) (effective 1 January 2019).

The Trustees have complied with the duty in part 1 section 4 of the Charities Act 2011 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Charity Commission. A detailed report of the activities undertaken and achievements by the Charity to further its charitable purposes for the public benefit is given below¹.

The business priorities for the organisation in this year are unchanged:

- **Professional**

- To act as advocates for people with obesity
- To provide opportunities for members (including Hot Topics and grants)
- To promote and further the study of obesity and its management
- To raise awareness of and support our Centres of Obesity Management (COMs) to highlight clinical and service delivery examples of excellence delivering obesity management

- **Developmental**

- To ensure production and circulation of a monthly e-bulletin to share best practice and highlight relevant obesity news and information
- To maintain the ASO website creating, sharing and signposting to relevant news and events

- **Education and Clinical**

- To produce and deliver educational programmes in support of high-quality excellence in obesity management and research including digital programmes such as webinars and meetings.

- **Research**

- To further research into the study of obesity
- To support funding of research into obesity prevention and management

2021-22 COVID Impact report

Our Response to COVID-19

2021 continued to be severely impacted by COVID-19 with the virus impacting adversely on people with obesity and the complications of obesity. The virus has had a significant impact on our membership with many members being frontline healthcare professionals affected not only by the pandemic itself but the resulting backlog in services compounded by a depleted and demoralised workforce.

COVID-19 has continued to impact on the organisation's ability to deliver educational events and services though these did start to return during the latter part of the Spring of 2022.

Our services have, however, continued to be delivered through virtual media with webinars and the innovative use of other digital media. The features and benefits of our new website and content management system allowed us to deliver a superb Hot Topics conference in September 2021 accessible to members via a dedicated conference dashboard on the website. The advantage of delivering the conference

¹ Since the Company qualifies as small under section 382 of the Companies Act 2006, the Strategic report required of medium and large companies under the Companies Act 2006 (Strategic Report and Directors' Report) Regulations 2013 has been omitted.

virtually also meant that it was recorded and made available to members who could not participate on the day of the event.

Having secured funds from NovoNordisk we were also able to deliver another excellent series of 7 webinars which were very popular. These topical webinars included:

Date	Title
30 June 2021	Perspectives on weight management and obesity treatment in men
29 July 2021	Obesity and the environment – where are we now?
30 September 2021	Physiological and behavioural adaptations to weight loss and their importance for weight loss maintenance
28 October 2021	Banning the advertisement of junk food: What does this mean for society, and what happens next?
18 November 2021	Physical Activity Webinars (Joint Series with EASO): Exercise Training for People Living with Overweight or Obesity: Multiple Benefits Beyond Weight Loss
2 December 2021	Physical Activity Webinars (Joint Series with EASO): Exercise Training for People Living with Overweight or Obesity: Effects on Eating Behaviour and Weight Loss
16 December 2021	Perspectives in Maternal Obesity: Joint webinar with ASO and the BDA
Other webinars held during this period	
27 January 2022	Obesity and Kidney Disease
21 Feb 2022	Health Inequalities and obesity

We have continued to collaborate with other key obesity organisations, led by Simon Williams including EASO, the British Dietetic Association and increased the reach and identity of ASO.

The pandemic also required our internal operations to be delivered digitally with trustee meetings and management meetings taking place virtually.

Operationally and financially ASO continued to adapt well to impact of the pandemic operating as a virtual organisation. However, there was continued impact on the ability to deliver Centres for Obesity Management events given that many clinicians and other health care professionals were no longer available to attend. Similarly, there continued to be fewer ASO Network meetings, although some areas were able to transfer back in-person meetings to virtual events.

Professional

Influencing and contribution to national policy

ASO works alongside numerous organisations across the UK and beyond to inform obesity policy, promote best practice and act as the patients advocate for people with obesity.

We have collaborated with a number of organisations including the British Dietetic Association and the European Association for the Study of Obesity to deliver high quality webinars on a range of topics including

childhood obesity, pregnancy and early years, benefits of exercise for people living with obesity, the effect of exercise on weight loss, appetite and behavioural interventions.

ASO also contributed to the development of the Obesity Health Alliance – *Turning the Tide: A 10-year Healthy Weight Strategy* and the pan-European *Health and Sustainable Development after COVID-19 report*.

We also joined the call for a World Health Organisation (WHO) Global action plan on obesity by signing an open letter to health ministers.

Chair of the Association at the time, Maria Bryant also co-authored an opinion paper for the BMJ on the UK government's decision to delay the implementation of their obesity strategy.

Developmental

Communicating with our members and the wider community

ASO Newsletter:

The widely respected monthly membership newsletter provides members with a vehicle to share information on national and international obesity and obesity related research, events, policy and position statements, educational resources, tools and jobs. The newsletter is also used to promote ASO activities and programmes to ensure members are fully informed. In this period our open rate for the newsletter ranged from 33% - 48% with a click through rate ranging from 16% - 37%.

ASO Networks:

In March 2022 our Scotland Network held a Network Natter to discuss the challenges of unhealthy snacks in hospitals: changing the availability and choices. A second Network Matter was held on 20th June exploring nutrient sensing, microbes and the gut and the role they play in obesity.

In April 2022 we held a Network in-person meeting in the Midlands (94 participants). We also held an East of England Obesity Study Day on June 9th for 20 persons.

ASO COMs:

The 4th ASO Centres of Obesity Management meeting was also held in Wales on 22nd June 2022 for 29 persons covering range of topics including dietary, physical activity and psychological approaches to the management of obesity. The meeting also covered pharmacological changes to obesity management.

ASO Awards:

In June 2022 we also launched our Prevention and Treatment Award 2022 which aims to encourage and recognise the best practice in obesity prevention and treatment in children, adolescents or adults. The £500 is awarded to a member of ASO who, acting individually or as part of a team, has made a significant contribution to the prevention or treatment of people living with overweight or obesity.

ASO Website:

Since December 2021 when we began tracking website analytics following the launch earlier that year of a new website we have seen 13,170 users, 19,724 sessions and 43,035 page views with a bounce rate of

56.48%. The majority of web visitors are based in the UK (60%) followed by the US (10%) and then the Netherlands (3%). There is limited information available on city (12% did not have a city set), but London was top with 16%, followed by Cardiff (4%), Edinburgh (3%) and then Amsterdam (2%). The majority of visitors are using a desktop – (71%) compared to a mobile (28%) or tablet (1%).

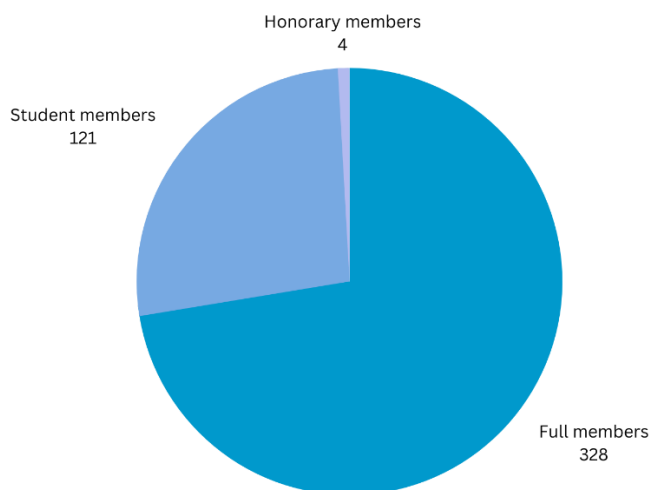
The top viewed page (after the homepage) was the main UKCO webpage; the events feed was the third most popular webpage (1,085 views) and the 'view all events' page was number 21 with 377 views. The ASO 'join' membership page was in the top 10 (eighth with 842 views). The majority of page views are driven by core ASO events. Our top referral page is the European Association for the Study of Obesity.

ASO Social Media:

During this accounting period, we have made concerted efforts to increase our presence on social media. We had 399,100 Twitter Impressions averaging 1,093 impressions per day. The average engagement rate over this period is 2.15% and total number of links clicked is 2,101. ASO Tweets received 1,391 retweets without comments, 2,014 likes and 71 replies. Total followers at the end of June 2022 is 5,382 with ASO gaining an average of 64 new followers each month over this period.

Membership composition

The membership numbers have remained static since 2021 and whilst we have lost 118 members since this period in 2021 we have gained 113 new members in the same period.



Education and clinical

During this accounting period we delivered 9 educational webinars.

We have collaborated with EASO and 90TEN (a healthcare specialist communications consultancy) to create a new online resource hub for healthcare professionals working in obesity and weight management. The preliminary launch was held on World Obesity Day.

Our annual conference was converted to a digital event and was attended by 97 delegates in real time with an additional registered 50 participants watching sessions on demand after the event. The conference, entitled **UKCO Hot Topics**, included eminent speakers such as Dr Giles Yeo and Professor Chris Whitty. 100% of the delegates reported the event completely fulfilled their reason for attending.

Research

In September 2021 we held a virtual early career research workshop attended by 19 delegates.

In June 2022 we launched our plans for a new mentorship scheme for early career researchers where a junior researcher will be teamed up with an experienced obesity researcher for mentorship and skills sharing.

Plans For Future Periods

In the remainder of 2022 and into 2023 ASO will continue to build on the organisational strengths developed as a result of the COVID pandemic, particularly our increased visibility via social media as well as our online web presence. We will maximise this momentum and consider developing more formal partnerships with other organisations. Our trustees will review business plans to ensure appropriate use of charity funds to promote the understanding of obesity through the pursuit of excellence in research and education.

Structure, Governance & Management

Constitution

The company is registered charity (Charity Number 1100648) and a UK company limited by guarantee (Company number 4796449). Membership is open to obesity researchers, healthcare professionals, clinicians, academics, scientists, and students who are working and/or studying in the field of obesity and to others who have a particular interest in this area.

Method of appointment and election of trustees

The management of the charity is the responsibility of the trustees who are elected and co-opted under the terms of the constitution. During this period the ASO was managed by 14 trustees, led Dr Maria Bryant who resigned upon completion of her term of office on 7 September 2022. The trustees, or any member of ASO can recommend a trustee for appointment. The term of office for trustees is three years and trustees may be re-appointed for a maximum of two terms of office as per the Memorandum and Articles of Association. The chair of the trustees changed in 2019 when Dr Maria Bryant was elected.

Policies adopted for the induction and training of trustees

A trustee manual is available for all trustees and induction. This was reviewed and updated in 2021 in line with a major review of all policies.

Following appointment of a new secretariat in March 2021 a review of all policies was undertaken and a schedule of updates was developed. Priority was given to critical policy updates to ensure the safety and security of the charity. These include Financial Controls Policy, Investment, Reserves, Procurement, Commercial Funding, Publication, endorsement and representation.

In 2021/22 the following new policies were adopted:

- Equality and Diversity
- Endorsement, Presentation and Publication
- Procurement
- Statement on Commercial Funding
- Membership
- Safeguarding and wellbeing

The following policies were reviewed and updated

- Code of Conduct
- Conflict of Interest
- Trustee Manual
- Financial Polices- including Financial controls, Expenses, Investment and Reserves
- Sponsorship and Partnership Policy

Organisation structure and decision making

The Trustees are assisted by a number of ASO sub-committees including finance, governance and membership; communication, partnerships and networking; research and scientific and clinical practice and obesity management.

In March 2021 a new secretariat, Red Hot Irons Ltd, was appointed to support the operational delivery for the organisation supported by the Consultancy, Simon and Gail Williams, who were engaged to undertake the communications, trustee and committee management and event management.

Pay Policy for key management

There are no paid staff, all work undertaken by the committee and trustees is done so voluntarily. The support agency is contracted to run the operational day-to-day activities and business administration.

Application and adherence to the Charity Governance Code

ASO recognise good governance is essential to our effectiveness, reputation and credibility. The Board of Trustees regularly review activities, policies and processes to ensure the charity is delivering against its mission and charitable objectives. We have implemented new robust measures to ensure effective and clear overview of financial controls. The board will also be undertaking a review of its effectiveness, assessing competencies, skills gaps and training needs through a process of audit and facilitated discussion later in 2022.

A trustee training video was shared by Red Hot Irons which provided an update on Charity Commission Guidance and the essential role of the trustee.

We operate a robust conflicts of interest policy, and all Trustees and Committee members complete declarations of interest each year. Conflict of interests form a standing item on all committee/board agendas. The Board aims to continuously improve its governance processes and is planning to work through the [Charity Governance Code](#) to ensure its governance structures adhere to the principles of the code and recommended practice.

Risk management

The Trustees analyse and undertake a review of the risks the Charity is exposed to as part of an annual business planning process and in accordance with Charity Commission guidance (CC26), scoring the risks

according to likelihood and impact. The systems and actions established to mitigate those risks are also reviewed by Trustees at each Board meeting and updated and adjusted accordingly, with the net risk in each area agreed. High risks closely monitored by the Trustees are:

- High level of dependency on too few income streams puts ASO at risk of sudden and/or long-term loss of funding – efforts continue to diversify income streams to include more Trusts and Foundation as well as funding from non-pharmaceutical companies.
- Potential for a sudden drop in income and the need to dip into accumulated reserves
- The risk that ASO could be perceived as being unduly influenced by sponsors/pharmaceutical industry. ASO has adopted stringent sponsorship & partnerships and endorsement policies and ensures where possible that there is a balance of sponsors from across the industry spectrum with no one sponsor having significant influence or control. Sponsors are not permitted to have any form of editorial control or influence over the content and development of new ASO branded materials

Volunteers

The Society is heavily reliant on the time, expertise and energy of its committee and other members. Much of the work of the charity is conducted virtually via email and teleconference and is undertaken on a voluntary basis.

Trustees, & senior management

Trustees

Prof Maria Bryant (chair) (Resigned 7 September 2022)
Dr Nerys Astbury
Professor Rachel Batterham (Resigned September 2022)
Kenneth Clare
Prof Emilie Combet (elected Nov 2021)
Dr Georgios Dimitriadis (elected November 2021)
Prof Graham Finlayson (resigned Sept 2022)
Dr Nicola Heslehurst (chair from 7th September 2022)
Dr David Hughes (Company Secretary)
Sarah LeBrocq
Mr Patrick McGinley (Treasurer)
Prof Alex Miras
Dr Julia Mueller (elected November 2021)
Mary O'Kane (elected November 2021)
Dr Becky Richards (resigned November 2022)
Dr Kath Roberts
Prof James Stubbs (resigned September 2021)
Dr Abd Tahrani (resigned June 2021)
Dr Simon Williams (resigned June 2021)

Registered office

4 Bank Court
Weldon Road
Loughborough
Leicestershire
LE11 5RF

Charity Registered Number

1100648

Bankers

Unity Trust bank plc
Nine Brindley Place
Birmingham
B1 2HB

ASO sub-committees

Finance, Governance and Membership
Chair: Prof Maria Bryant

Clinical Practice and Obesity Management
Chair: Prof Alex Miras

Research and Scientific
Chair: Dr Rebecca Richards (Resigned 9/11/22)
Chair: Emilie Combet (appointed 9/11/22_

Communications, partnerships and networks
Chair: Prof Graham Finlayson

Accountants

Essex Abel
4 Bank Court
Weldon Road
Loughborough
Leics
LE11 5RF

Financial Review

Principal Funding

The principal funding sources for the Charity in 2021/22 as in previous years were:

- Voluntary income from the pharmaceutical and diet industry (fees for event sponsorship)
- Voluntary income from the pharmaceutical and diet industry (to support educational webinar programmes)
- Restricted grants provided by the pharmaceutical industry to support research programmes
- Membership fees

The total funding secured in 2021/2022 £155,804.

Principal Expenditure

Total expenditure in 2021/2022 was £25,872. ASO became VAT registered on 1 Nov 2020 and this enabled us to claim back input VAT from previous years amounting to £37,333.15. As a result of the ability to claim this back the expenditure for this year is lower than expected.

Key expenditure areas were on the association management services provided by Red Hot Irons and the provision of webinar services and planning for the Hot Topics digital event.

Reserves Policy

ASO has no regular guaranteed sources of income and the long-term funding of the charity is uncertain. The charity however does have fixed operating costs in terms of the activities required to maintain its presence and further its charitable objectives. The charity's work is planned one year in advance with financial commitments made up to two years in advance on some programmes such as the annual conference.

The Trustees have therefore decided that in order to secure the viability of the organisation beyond the immediate future, to provide reliable service and required funding over the longer term, ASO must be able to absorb financial setbacks. It is therefore necessary to set aside some of the current income as a reserve against future uncertainties.

In view of the financial needs of the organisation, the trustees have agreed to maintain a reserve policy to retain sufficient funds to cover the operating expenses of the organisation for one year. The reserve would cover: secretariat expenditure, supporting funds for agreed projects, and other liabilities such as legal expenses, and other miscellaneous expenses that are necessary for the operation of the charity.

The trustees will review the reserve policy at a Trustee meeting each year held prior to the AGM to ensure that:

- 1) the policy is adequate for its need in the coming year
- 2) reserve level is enough to cover one year operating expenditure
- 3) take necessary steps if reserve falls short of the funding requirement.

Going concern

After making appropriate enquiries, the Trustees have a reasonable expectation that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they

continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements. Further details regarding the adoption of the going concern basis can be found in the accounting policies.

Financial Review Conclusion

The Society ended the year with net income of £129,932. COVID affected the services that were possible to provide but the resulting webinar series was popular and well received. The delivery of online webinars and events provided a valuable tool to support learning during COVID.

The charity continues to hold healthy reserves of £152,262. However, sponsorship and funding remain a significant challenge and cutting further costs will be difficult. 2021/2022 was a challenging year and savings were made due to an inability to travel and hold face to face events, but like many organisations, expenditure in 2022/2023 is likely to increase as we return to in-person events. The Trustees continue to recognise that the funding situation remains challenging and will continue to be innovative in our approach to fundraising, cost savings and ensuring value for money.

The impact of COVID-19 on our finances has been significant in limiting the events and type of events that could be provided, and the funding that could be generated.

Meanwhile ASO continue to explore other opportunities for funding programmes of activity and will be further exploring grant-making and sponsorship opportunities during 2022/2023.

Statement of Trustees' responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under company law the Trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the Company and of its incoming resources and application of resources, including its income and expenditure, for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles of the Charities SORP (FRS 102);
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable UK Accounting Standards (FRS 102) have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Disclosure of information to auditors

Each of the persons who are Trustees at the time when this Trustees' report is approved has confirmed that:

- so far as that Trustee is aware, there is no relevant information of which the charity's accountant and independent examiner are unaware, and
- that Trustee has taken all the steps that ought to have been taken as a Trustee in order to be aware of any relevant information and to establish that the charity's accountants are aware of that information.

Approved by order of the members of the board of Trustees and signed on their behalf by:

Maria Bryant

Chair of the Board of Trustees to September 2022

Date:

Nicola Heslehurst

Chair, Board of Trustees from September 2022

Date: